

Bill title: Children's Fruit and Vegetable Act

Bill number: [H.R. 4333](#)

Date introduced: Dec. 16, 2009

Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor and the House Committee on Agriculture.

Summary: This legislation is aimed at increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables in school breakfasts and lunches. The bill includes several strategies that will improve health and limit obesity among America's schoolchildren.

Among the bill's provisions:

- USDA will implement a plan to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables purchased for school feeding programs.
- USDA will work with schools to encourage the use of salad bars in school cafeterias, a proven strategy for increasing fruit and vegetable consumption (\$10 million/year for two years).
- Improve overall cafeteria quality and feeding infrastructure (\$100 million one-time payment).
- Promote farm-to-cafeteria programs (\$10 million/year for five years).
- Provide schools with training and technical assistance (\$500,000/year for five years).

One of the bill's key provisions instructs USDA to implement a plan that will remove barriers to the purchase and distribution of perishable fruits and vegetables within school feeding programs.

The bill also instructs USDA to put in place a plan to promote the use of salad bars in schools. The legislation authorizes \$10 million for fiscal years 2011 and 2012 to help schools purchase salad bars and fruit and vegetable bars for their cafeterias.

A study illustrating the benefits of salad bars in schools was conducted by Dr. Wendy Slusser, director of UCLA's Fit for Health Program, and Harvinder Sareen, Director of Clinical Programs at WellPoint, a health benefits company. They report dramatic increases of fruit and vegetable consumption when produce is made available in school meals. Their data also show that increasing availability of fruits and vegetables through salad bars sets up opportunities for children to have repeated exposures to new foods, which can affect their eating habits for a lifetime.

The legislation includes \$100 million for overall cafeteria infrastructure improvements. Many cafeterias around the country are looking to move away from outside food contractors and toward scratch kitchens, but lack the funds to implement such a plan. It also provides competitive matching grants and technical assistance to schools to improve access to local foods, directing \$10 million a year for five years toward these farm-to-school programs.

While the Children's Fruit and Vegetable Act has been introduced as a standalone bill, Rep. Farr has indicated he will actively advocate for its inclusion in next year's Child Nutrition Act reauthorization.

A recent report titled "School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children" by the Institute of Medicine, the health arm of the National Academy of Sciences, states that increasing the amount and variety of vegetables and fruits in schools is one of the best ways to make school meals healthier. The group's recommendation's that schools increase their offering of fruits and vegetables are intended to bring school meals in line with dietary guidelines.

The full IOM study is available [here](#) .